

# ELEPHANT CRISIS FUND



## 2020 MID YEAR REPORT

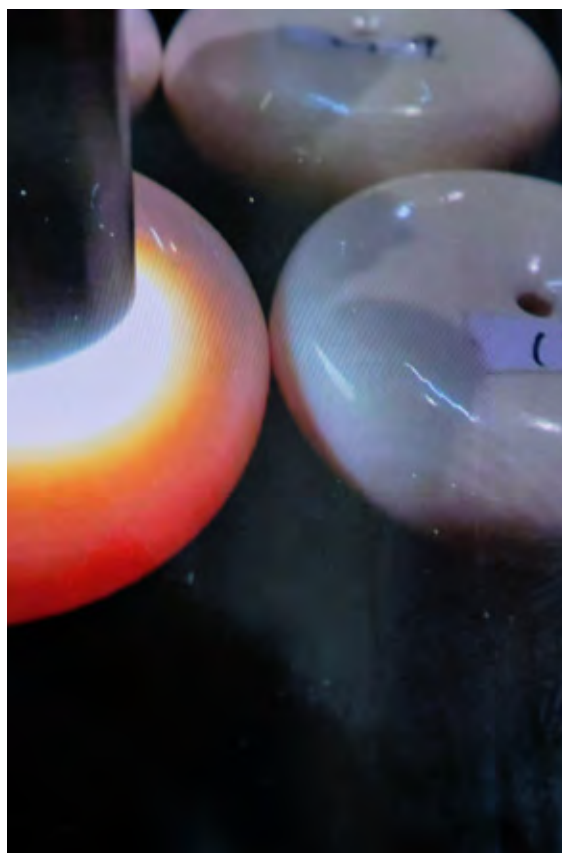








猛犸象牙「弥勒笑佛」挂件，笑口常开 原色猛犸果冻料 油润满纹 开脸喜庆 乐呵，佩戴精致，笑口常开，好运自然来，搭配6mm 设计款小叶紫檀佛珠链，精美大气，上身效果大气上档次



Ivory items being advertised for sale in Laos on WeChat in the midst of the COVID-19 crisis.

# Overview

As 2020 dawned, the ivory crisis seemed to be receding. Elephant poaching levels were going down in much of Africa except for the Central African forests, law enforcement officials were disrupting trafficking networks, and ivory prices continued to decline. Then the COVID-19 pandemic arrived. We are now working to understand its impact on our mission and adapting our response.

Dire warnings about the impact of the current situation on wildlife in Africa and fears of a new wave of elephant poaching have been stoked by the media. **There is no evidence yet of an increase in elephant poaching.** Where there was effective protection before, it still exists; where there was limited law enforcement presence, little has changed. However, the situation may change for the worse as disruption continues.

In some areas, there has been a **local collapse in the price of ivory.** This may be because local travel restrictions prevent traffickers from moving ivory, or because transport to Asia is more difficult now. Future demand for ivory may fall, as the Chinese government clamps down on all illegal wildlife trade, and as the recession hits spending on luxuries such as ivory. But it is also possible that ivory prices will rise again, if people decide to stockpile precious materials such as ivory and gold because of a lack of confidence in other investments.

Law enforcement activities in Nsumbu National Park in Zambia continue as usual despite the pandemic.  
© Frankfurt Zoological Society Nsumbu Tanganyika Conservation Programme.





# SUCCESSSES

**REDUCED POACHING** in many areas supported by ECF partners.

**NUMEROUS SEIZURES** of ivory and disruption of trafficking networks by Chinese customs.

**MAJOR PROGRESS IN INVESTIGATIONS** into transnational criminal networks operating between West Africa and Asia.

**REDUCTION IN IVORY OPENLY FOR SALE** in Southeast Asian countries, especially Laos and Myanmar.

# CHALLENGES

**REDUCED INCOME** for the ECF at the same time as increased requests from partners who have lost tourism income.

**UNCERTAINTY** about the impact of COVID-19.

With the sale of ivory in China now illegal, **IDENTIFYING CONSUMERS** has become more difficult.

**INCREASE IN HUMAN-ELEPHANT CONFLICT**, particularly in West Africa, as elephant habitat shrinks.



The ECF stepped in with emergency support for Nouabalé Ndoki National Park in the Republic of Congo, after funding from the US Fish and Wildlife Service was suspended. Above: © Chris Thouless. Below: © Sebastien Assoignons / Wildlife Conservation Society.



Even if local ivory prices go down, poaching may continue because people have fewer economic alternatives or because they are hunting for bushmeat and happen to encounter elephants. In some places poaching may be easier because there are no longer tourists to act as a deterrent, or the loss of tourism income results in less money to pay for rangers. While this is a real worry for the future, **most wildlife law enforcement operations still seem to be continuing for the moment.** In the Central African forests, which is the current elephant poaching hotspot, tourism revenue has always been low, and the suspension of funding from the US Fish and Wildlife Service is a greater concern than the impact of COVID-19.

***The Elephant Crisis Fund is committed to remaining flexible and supporting its partners however in can in this rapidly changing world.***

The Elephant Crisis Fund (ECF) is committed to remaining flexible and supporting its partners however it can in this rapidly changing world. **Some partners are continuing operations with little change, while others are being hit by loss of tourism income or delays from other funders.** We are providing some emergency funding to deal with these situations, and allowing partners to reallocate project funding to core costs. We are also maintaining a reserve to enable us to move funds quickly if the poaching threat escalates in a particular place.



# THE ELEPHANT CRISIS FUND

**The ongoing elephant poaching crisis in Africa is driven by a complex, international ivory trade which thrives on poverty, insecurity, organized crime, corruption, and greed. To tackle this issue head on, Save the Elephants and the Wildlife Conservation Network created the Elephant Crisis Fund (ECF).**

The ECF works with a coalition of individuals, scientists, conservation organizations, and governments to stop the killing of elephants, prevent ivory from reaching markets, and reduce the profitability of the trade in ivory products.

The ECF supports the best initiatives in need of funds regardless of where they come from. The organizations able to make the most impact—whether they are tiny local NGOs or larger multinational institutions—get our support. A team of experts works to ensure strategic and effective allocation of the funds generously provided by donors.

The ECF is able to respond quickly and with minimal bureaucracy, deploying funds in as little as 24 hours when necessary. Uniquely, 100% of funds are used to support on-the-ground programs that save elephants—not a single cent goes to administrative fees or overhead.

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In seven years, the ECF has deployed \$24.3 million to the best efforts to save elephants and end the ivory crisis, and is aiming to disburse a total of \$50 million by 2023. With poaching, trafficking, and demand for ivory still at unsustainable levels in many parts of Africa, the ECF will not stop until the crisis has ended, and elephant populations across Africa are no longer under threat.

# 111,000



**reduction** in Africa's elephant population between 2007 and 2015  
(this reflects the most current figures available)

## 300

**Grants**

issued by the  
ECF since 2013

## 82

**Organizations**

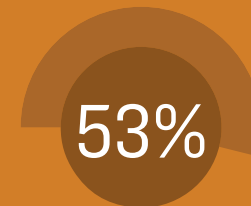
have received grants  
from the ECF

## 40

**Countries**

with ECF investments

**% of funding allocated to**



**anti-poaching  
projects**



**anti-trafficking  
projects**



**demand reduction  
projects**

## \$24.3 million

granted to ECF partners since 2013

## 0%

of your donation going to  
administrative fees or overhead



## \$1,246,000

**granted so far  
in 2020**



# Anti-Poaching

## BRINGING ELEPHANT POPULATIONS BACK FROM THE BRINK

**The Elephant Crisis Fund has a special interest in helping to bring small and imperilled elephant populations back from the brink.** After years of heavy poaching there are many places with suitable habitat, but with almost no elephants. If the last ones go, there is very little chance of getting them back again, because translocating elephants over vast distances with poor roads would be almost impossible. The loss of national elephant populations could lead to a corresponding loss of political will to look after protected areas. In other places, particularly in West Africa, small elephant populations have survived in patches of natural vegetation surrounded by farmland. These are even more difficult to protect, but they may have a chance of survival if their core areas can be protected and conflict with farmers kept under control.

Chinko Reserve in the Central African Republic (CAR) is an example of how it may be possible to save remnant populations. In eastern CAR there is a vast area of wild country without permanent human habitation. In the 1970s, over 30,000 elephants lived here but they were targeted by the Janjaweed horsemen from Sudan and by the early 2010s it was thought that they might have been entirely lost.

**A small group of young, dedicated conservationists were determined to save Chinko, despite the outbreak of civil war.** They established control over 20,000 sq. km (an area twice the size of Yellowstone National Park), and African Parks, a conservation NGO that manages protected areas on behalf of governments, agreed to take the project under its wing.

Clockwise from top left: The vast landscape of Chinko in eastern Central African Republic. © Brent Stirton. Giant eland antelope in Chinko. © Chris Thouless. Cultural ambassadors, recruited from their own ethnic groups by African Parks, escort pastoralists away from the core wildlife areas. © Elliot Woods.





Through law enforcement, engagement with pastoralists who move through the area, and using camera traps and aerial patrols, they started to see early signs of success. The main initial focus was on the north of the reserve, which was the stronghold of the equally threatened giant eland antelope. But small numbers of elephants had been hiding in thick cover along rivers and streams, particularly in the central and southern part of the reserve. **With ECF funding, African Parks was able to bring forward its plan to establish a presence in the heart of the elephant refuge** by buying an additional ultralight aircraft, constructing a forward base and airstrip, and equipping and deploying elephant protection teams by helicopter.

African Parks employed four former hunters from local villages to sensitize the local population about the importance of elephants and to pass on details gleaned on any planned poaching activities. **African Parks now has a new mandate from the CAR government to extend protection over a larger area**, and there are increasing sightings of elephants with young calves. It is early days yet, but ten years ago few would have given the elephants of eastern CAR any chance of survival. Security is still very much an issue as there are rebel bands and heavily armed herders all around the protected area, but Chinko has used 'cultural ambassadors' from their own ethnic groups to escort them away from the core wildlife areas.



Above: Chinko's three ultralight surveillance aircraft are an essential anti-poaching tool in this massive, inaccessible area. © Gael le Martin / African Parks. Below: A fleeting sighting of Chinko's elusive elephants. © Chinko Aviation.





Other sites with large areas of former habitat but few surviving elephants include Okapi Wildlife Reserve in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Southern National Park in South Sudan. **Both are vast areas where elephant numbers have massively reduced** (from 6,500 to 500 in Okapi and from 15,000 to low hundreds at best in Southern National Park). They are in countries suffering from conflict and insecurity, but the Wildlife Conservation Society and Fauna & Flora International have committed to protecting these challenging areas. The ECF is supporting them in their work with national authorities to improve the management of Okapi Wildlife Reserve and Southern National Park, which can once again be elephant strongholds.



Newly built ranger accommodation block at Adusa outpost in Okapi Game Reserve in the Democratic Republic of Congo, funded by the ECF. The old accommodation is on the right of the photo. © Chris Thouless.

In West Africa, most elephant populations are facing perhaps an even more serious challenge. They are confined to shrinking areas of natural vegetation surrounded by farmland and growing human populations. **As farmers push further into elephant habitat, there is inevitable conflict and elephants are killed in retaliation, further endangering already tiny populations.**

***In West Africa, most elephant populations are facing perhaps an even more serious challenge. They are confined to shrinking areas of natural vegetation...***

Some of Africa's more surprising elephant survivors live in the Omo Forest Reserve, just east of one of Africa's most notorious mega-cities, Lagos, which also holds one of the largest remaining ivory markets in Africa. They are thought to number about 80, **probably the last potentially viable forest elephant population in Nigeria.** The Omo Forest is threatened by uncontrolled hunting, logging, and clearance for farms. In 2018 a new wave of illegal farmers cleared part of the forest for cash crops, causing the elephants to scatter and come into conflict with local communities. A man was killed, and an elephant was shot in retaliation.

A consortium of conservation organizations including the Nigerian Nature Foundation, the Wild Planet Trust, and African Nature Investors came together with the Ogun State Government to create a 'safe zone' that would be patrolled and protected against deforestation by rangers nominated by local communities. **No further human or elephant deaths have occurred** in Omo Forest Reserve since the inception of the project, so there are now some signs of hope.



One of two bull elephants successfully collared in northern Angola in March 2020. © Isilda Cavaleca / Kissama Foundation.

In northern Angola, in the escarpment forests just inland from the capital Luanda, there is **an overlooked population of forest elephants, the southernmost in Africa.** Almost nothing was known about them until recently, except for occasional reports of crop raiding, and panicked elephants harassed close to human habitation. With support from the ECF, the Kissama Foundation has started to study and protect these elephants. It has set up camera traps, radio-collared two bull elephants, carried out sensitization missions with local communities, and employed a 'community elephant guardian'.



In some other places, surviving elephants have become so elusive that we do not know if there are enough left to be a viable population. Here **the priority is to understand the situation before protection measures can be put in place**. For instance, there are thought to be no more than ten elephants remaining in Africa's westernmost population in Senegal. Recent camera trap photographs have shown what appears to be only a single male. We are supporting Panthera to search more widely to see if there are additional survivors, using DNA fingerprinting from dung to distinguish individuals.

We are supporting similar efforts in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea Bissau. However, the Outamba Kilimi National Park in Sierra Leone was invaded by illegal loggers just before the COVID-19 outbreak, and the few remaining elephants were driven out of the park into surrounding community forests. Fortunately, now that we have partners on the ground, **there is a chance of reversing this situation** once the travel restrictions ease.

While some of our partners are having to scale back their activities during the current crisis, those protecting elephants in the field are still there and we are doing all we can to support them. **It is important to ensure that these 'elephants on the edge' do not disappear while the world's attention is turned to other issues.**



ECF funded motorbikes have improved patrolling capability in Outamba Kilimi National Park in Sierra Leone.  
© Pan Verus Project.



A lone bull photographed in Senegal's Niokolo-Koba National Park in January 2020. This is believed to be the first confirmed direct sighting of an elephant in the park in many years. © Direction des Parcs Nationaux / Panthera / Petowal Mining Company.



Anti-poaching patrols continue as normal in Thuma and Dedza-Salima Forest Reserves in Malawi during the COVID-19 crisis. © Wildlife Action Group Malawi.





# Anti-Trafficking

## PANDEMIC CAUSES DISRUPTION FOR TRAFFICKERS

© Frank af Petersens.

**Traffickers are now taking more risks as they look for alternative routes. They are having to corrupt new officials to allow movement of illegal products across borders, and this provides an opportunity to penetrate trafficking networks.**

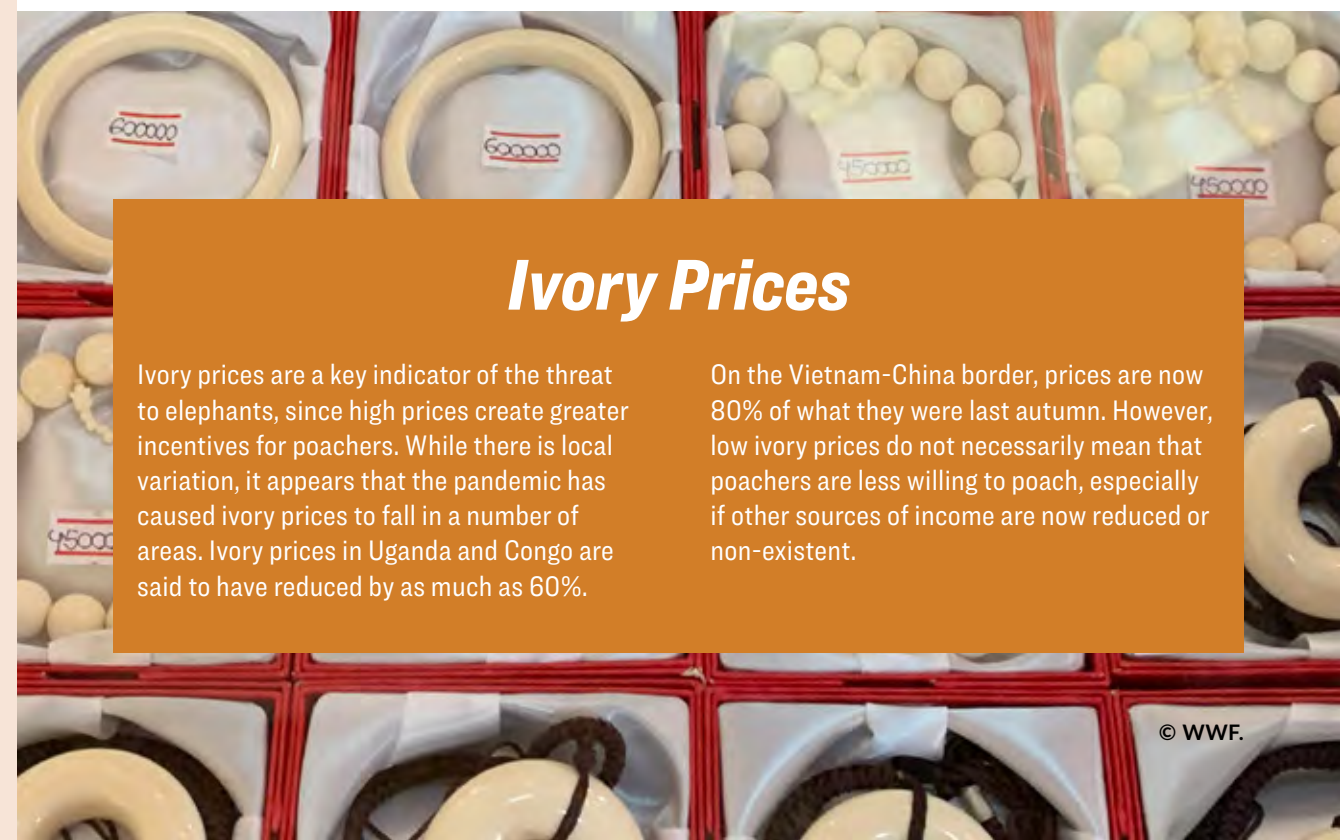
**The current pandemic is causing major disruption to illegal wildlife trafficking in some areas, but the long-term impact on ivory trafficking is unclear.** Many airports, including those used for wildlife trafficking, are currently closed. Wildlife traffickers are now increasingly reliant on overland and shipping routes to move their contraband from Africa to Asia.

Traffickers are now taking more risks as they look for alternative routes. They are having to corrupt new officials to allow movement of illegal products across borders, and this provides an opportunity to penetrate trafficking networks. The ECF is supporting a wide range of NGOs working with law enforcement agencies across Africa and Asia, which are **continuing their important work during this period in spite of numerous challenges.**

In China, the 2018 ivory ban and subsequent efforts to strengthen Chinese law enforcement activities mean that more resources have been allocated to the Anti-Smuggling Bureau of China Customs and the Chinese Forest Police to tackle wildlife crime, leading to increased ivory seizures in 2019. **The ECF is supporting a number of NGO partners which are working closely with Chinese law enforcement agencies** by providing analysis and collaborative support. This, combined with disruption to global supply chains caused by the pandemic and the resulting difficulty of transport into China, means that ivory is being stored in neighboring Southeast Asian countries. The longer traffickers have to keep goods before transporting them on, the greater the costs of storage, and the greater the risk of getting caught.

**...disruption of the global containerized trade means that ivory traffickers are facing greater uncertainty...**

One of the ECF's partners, the Wildlife Justice Commission, has reported that ivory is being stockpiled in Southeast Asian countries bordering China, such as Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, in response to increased Chinese law enforcement activity over the past year. **Brokers are buying large quantities of ivory and then finding it difficult to sell even at discounted prices,** and this has been greatly compounded by the current pandemic. As ivory is generally smuggled in consignments of legal goods, disruption of the global containerized trade means that ivory traffickers are facing greater uncertainty, both in terms of greater risks and reduced profit, and this in turn is reflected in the absence of large ivory seizures so far reported in 2020.



## Ivory Prices

Ivory prices are a key indicator of the threat to elephants, since high prices create greater incentives for poachers. While there is local variation, it appears that the pandemic has caused ivory prices to fall in a number of areas. Ivory prices in Uganda and Congo are said to have reduced by as much as 60%.

On the Vietnam-China border, prices are now 80% of what they were last autumn. However, low ivory prices do not necessarily mean that poachers are less willing to poach, especially if other sources of income are now reduced or non-existent.

© WWF.





Above and right: Ivory items confiscated and being held by Zambia's Department of National Parks and Wildlife Investigations and Intelligence Unit. These are exhibits in ongoing court cases against ivory traffickers.

Nevertheless, illegal wildlife products are still being trafficked into and through Southeast Asia in spite of additional roadblocks, increased security at checkpoints and borders, and delays. Further, **wildlife traffickers are reportedly getting ready to resume their operations as soon as restrictions are eased**, which

they anticipate happening soon. The ECF is monitoring this rapidly evolving situation carefully, to ensure that funds are granted to the most effective partners who are able to gather intelligence, work closely with law enforcement agencies, and have the greatest disruptive impact on ivory trafficking.

## ***The Impact of the Lockdown***

The majority of wildlife law enforcement agencies are continuing to operate during lockdown, and some of our NGO partners have received special permission to work during the pandemic. Traffickers are also continuing their illegal activities, and our partners in Uganda, Zambia, and Malawi did not see a reduction in attempts to sell ivory during the first half of this year. Whether this indicates business as usual, or a difficulty in finding buyers, is not clear. Restrictions on movement and the fear

of quarantine are making things particularly difficult for traffickers trying to move ivory across borders, and they are adapting by conducting more of their business remotely rather than face-to-face. This in turn provides an opportunity for intelligence collection and disruption, and the ECF is supporting several NGOs which are working closely with law enforcement partners to develop online contact with traffickers in order to disrupt their trafficking operations.







# Demand Reduction

## UNDERSTANDING PATTERNS OF DEMAND FOR IVORY

© WWF.

**In spite of the 2018 ban, China is still believed to be the greatest consumer of ivory in the world.** However, Chinese demand for illegal ivory remains very difficult to quantify. It is still not known which sectors of the population are buying ivory, or whether they are making purchases within China, while travelling overseas, or online. Market research conducted by TRAFFIC in 2019 showed that in Cambodia, Laos, and Myanmar, there was a drop in the number of outlets selling ivory and the number of ivory items on open sale. This shift has likely been in response to factors including increased law enforcement efforts targeting the physical markets, which has driven some of the trade underground and online.

It is not known whether Chinese tourists buying ivory overseas account for a significant part of Chinese ivory sales, but if they do the pandemic will have significantly impacted demand, as tourists have not been able to travel to neighboring Southeast Asian countries. Information from the Wildlife Justice Commission suggests that sellers of retail ivory in Cambodia and Laos are experiencing **a dramatic decline in the number of Chinese customers on account of travel restrictions.**

There are many different factors that impact demand for ivory, including availability, the possibility that ivory is seen as an investment that holds its value in times of financial uncertainty, as well as deep-rooted cultural attachment. Given the lack of understanding around current Chinese demand for ivory following the Chinese ban, **it is not clear how the demand for ivory will have been impacted by the current pandemic.** We have been reviewing our position to better understand these gaps and we are now looking for the right projects that can really help us to reduce demand.



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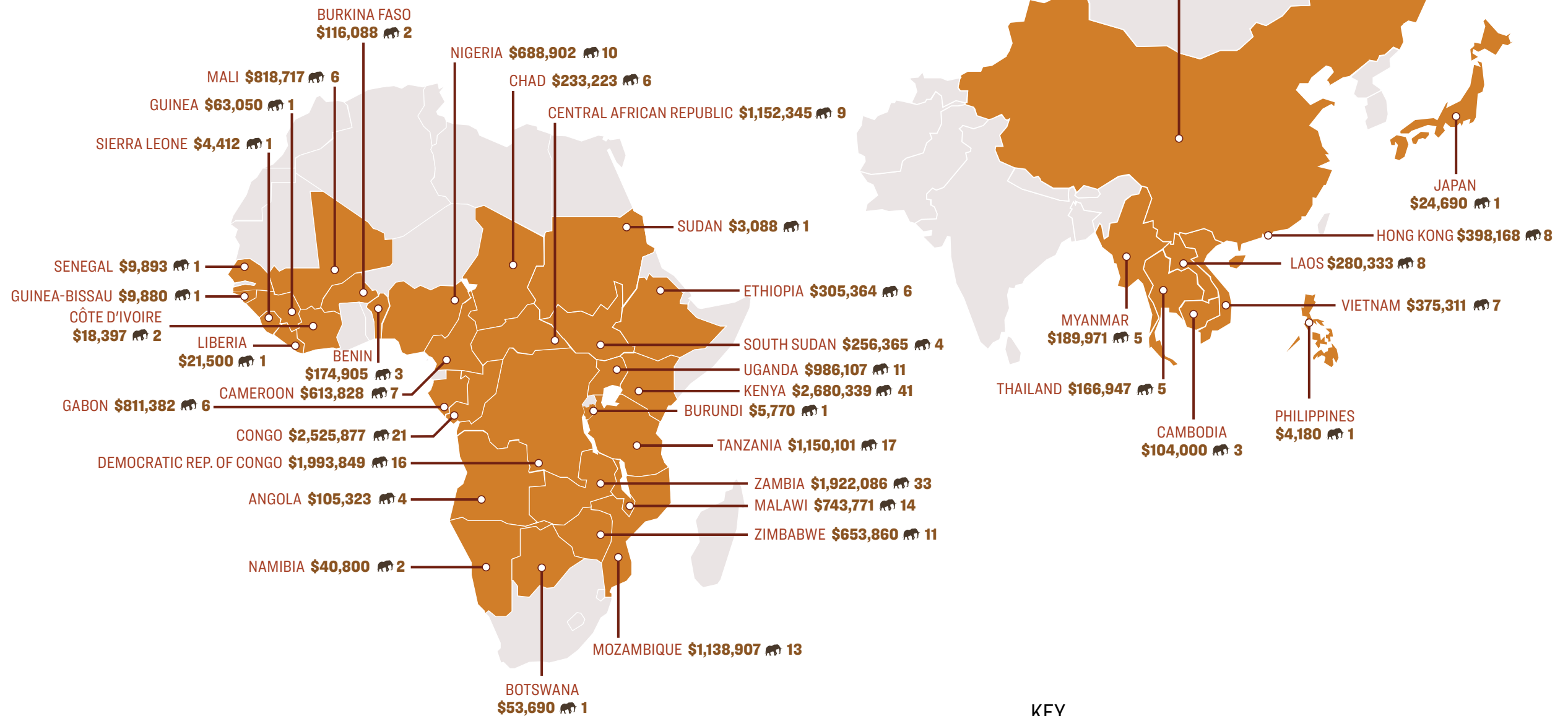
©WILDLIFE ALLIANCE

ECF grantee Fauna & Flora International is supporting authorities in Cambodia to address the illegal trade in ivory and other wildlife products. As part of this initiative, an ivory carving factory and shops selling ivory were raided by the Wildlife Rapid Rescue Team (a joint effort of Wildlife Alliance and the Royal Government of Cambodia) during February and March 2020, and confiscations and arrests were made. Illegal ivory sales have been further impacted by a dramatic decline in Chinese tourism due to the COVID-19 outbreak. © Wildlife Alliance



# GLOBAL INVESTMENTS TO END THE IVORY CRISIS

## ECF GRANTS BY COUNTRY AND US\$ INVESTMENT



★ The ECF has also funded 20 anti-trafficking grants that span regional or multi-regional areas, with support totaling \$2,406,357. In addition, the ECF has funded three demand reduction grants and one anti-trafficking grant in the USA totaling \$91,649.

### KEY

**\$** Amount granted (US\$)  
**🐘** Number of grants

This map includes all grants issued since the launch of the ECF in 2013.



# Looking ahead

## Plans for the second half of 2020

In these uncertain times, the ECF continues to provide critical support for elephant conservation. While some partners are having to limit their activities, the majority are continuing as usual or finding new opportunities. We will continue to monitor the situation, and if elephant poaching increases in particular areas, help to plug the gaps where it is happening. The world will continue to change at a rapid pace over the next six months, and we will ensure that the ECF uses its strengths of speed and agility to adapt accordingly and deliver funding for elephant conservation where it is most needed.





# Our Partners

The ECF works with a constantly expanding network of exceptional partners, strategically chosen for their innovative projects which are turning the tide on the ivory trade and ensuring the long-term survival of key elephant populations. The COVID-19 pandemic has presented a new set of challenges for our partners, and we are honored to be able to provide support and flexible funding during this time of crisis.

ADM Capital Foundation  
 African Parks  
 African Wildlife Foundation  
 Agence Nationale des Parcs Nationaux, Gabon  
 Basel Institute on Governance  
 Big Life Foundation  
 Biocarbon Partners  
 Born Free Foundation  
 Centre on Illicit Networks & Transnational  
   Organised Crime  
 Chengeta Wildlife  
 Conservation Justice  
 Conservation Lake Tanganyika  
 Conservation Lower Zambezi  
 Conservation South Luangwa  
 East African Wildlife Society  
 Elephant Research and Conservation  
 Elephant Voices  
 Elephants Alive  
 Environmental Investigation Agency  
 Fauna & Flora International  
 Focus Africa  
 Focused Conservation Solutions  
 Forgotten Parks Foundation  
 Frankfurt Zoological Society  
 Freeland  
 Game Rangers International  
 Global Wildlife Conservation  
 Gorongosa Restoration Project  
 Integrated Rural Development and Nature  
   Conservation  
 International Fund for Animal Welfare  
 International Zoo Veterinary Group  
 Kenya Wildlife Service  
 Kissama Foundation  
 Legal Assistance Centre, Namibia  
 Liberty Shared  
 Lilongwe Wildlife Trust  
 Lukuru Wildlife Research Foundation

Maisha Consulting  
 Mara Elephant Project  
 Maravi Risk Management  
 Mareja Community Conservation Project  
 Natural Resource Conservation Network  
 Natural Resources Defense Council  
 Northern Rangelands Trust  
 Oxford Brookes University  
 PAMS Foundation  
 Panthera France  
 Research Centre in Biodiversity and Genetic  
   Resources  
 Save The Elephants  
 Southern Tanzania Elephant Project  
 Space for Giants  
 Stichting Wings for Conservation  
 Stop Ivory  
 Tashinga Initiative Trust  
 The WILD Foundation  
 The Zambezi Society  
 Tikki Hywood Foundation  
 TRAFFIC  
 Tsavo Trust  
 Uganda Conservation Foundation  
 University of Utah IsoForensics  
 University of Washington  
 Wild Planet Trust  
 WildAid  
 Wildlife Action Group Malawi  
 Wildlife Conservation Global  
 Wildlife Conservation Society  
 Wildlife Crime Prevention  
 Wildlife Justice Commission  
 Wildlife Traxx Consultancy  
 Wildlife Works  
 WildlifeDirect  
 Working Dogs for Conservation  
 World Wildlife Fund  
 Zoological Society of London



# Thank you

During this unprecedented time, when everyone's lives have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, the steadfast commitment of our donors has been inspiring. Your incredible support is allowing our partners to sustain the significant progress made over recent years to defeat the ivory trade, often in situations where other funding streams have been withdrawn, reduced, or threatened.

Thank you to our generous major supporters, #knotonmyplanet and Tiffany & Co, and to our loyal private contributors. We also remain extremely grateful to the Leonardo DiCaprio Foundation, as the founding partner of the ECF.





[elephantcrisisfund.org](http://elephantcrisisfund.org)

